

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-7, 10-16, 20-33, 35 and 43-48 were pending. Claim 2 has been amended, claims 10, 12-16, 20-33 and 35 have been canceled, and new claims 49-55 have been added. Therefore, upon entry of this amendment, which is respectfully requested, claims 1-7, 11 and 43-55 will be pending.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the allowance of claims 43-48.

Claim 10 was objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, in order to expedite allowance of claims and issuance of a Patent, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 10. Claim 10 has accordingly been canceled. All claims depending from claim 1 are therefore allowable based at least on their dependency therefrom.

New dependent claims 49-55 depend from allowable claim 48 and are therefore allowable based at least on their dependency therefrom. But for the differences in the base independent claims, dependent claims 49-55 are similar in scope to dependent claims 2-7 and 11.

The remaining rejected claims have hereby been canceled so as to expedite prosecution and issuance of a Patent. Applicants reserve the right to file a continuation application to pursue the subject matter of such canceled claims and others.

CONCLUSION

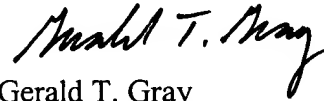
In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

Appl. No. 09/639,014
Amdt. dated January 8, 2004
Reply to Office Action of December 10, 2003

PATENT

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 925-472-5000.

Respectfully submitted,



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